

St. Petersburg Times

Bob Graham says oil industry must address 'culture of complacency'

By Alex Leary

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WASHINGTON — The commission studying the BP oil disaster will call for tougher federal permitting regulations and an industry-created safety organization, according to a preview by Bob Graham, a former Florida governor and U.S. senator.

Graham, in an interview Tuesday with the St. Petersburg Times, said the months-long study of the massive spill in the Gulf of Mexico revealed a "culture of complacency" in the oil and gas industry that "led to a dozen or more misjudgments, failures to ask the right questions and misinterpretation of data — all of which cascaded into the explosion of the Deepwater Horizon."

The National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling is to release its report next week, and hold public hearings in the gulf region. Graham, appointed by President Barack Obama as co-chairman, outlined two recommendations that will be among those in the report:

- The government should give the Department of Interior far longer than the current 30 days to respond to a permit request.
- The industry should form a safety organization that will set a high bar, similar to what the nuclear power and chemical sectors have done.

Graham said that despite the Exxon Valdez spill in 1989 in Alaska, very little had been done to prevent another catastrophe.